

[Memo from Alan Lomax to Harold Spivacke, January 26, 1942]

Recording trips. 1942

10-5079

MEMORANDUM

From Archive of American Folk-song Division

To the Chief of the Music Division

January 26, 1942

Dear Dr. Spivacke:

In response to your note about the project for recording Woody Guthrie's songs, allow me to say that whether or not some of the Guthrie material will be restricted because of his own plans to use it commercially, the continuing documentation of this most unusual of American ballad makers has a very great importance; and no commercial company's release will provide for us the sort of material which will some day make a study of his repertory and his continual production of new songs possible.

Also, allow me to say that the group with which Mr. Guthrie is working is continually experimenting with the development and extension of the medium of American folk-song, and the record of their experiments will have much historical significance.

In answer to your question about the potential usefulness of the records, allow me to say that the only records which have gone from the Archive to Mrs. Roosevelt at her special request were a group made for us by Woody Guthrie and his singers. Copies have also

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been ordered by O.E.M., and other fragments have been used in the construction of "The Ballad Hunter" and our current documentary series. Therefore, may I urge again that my first recommendation be passed on favorably.

Respectfully yours, Alan Lomax
Alan Lomax Assistant in Charge Archive of American Folk-song

ALjs

Alan Lomax

Please hold until outcome of current "battle" is decided.

H.S.